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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: WB/G SITREP: IDF KILLS AL-AQSA MILITANT IN NABLUS,
AS MANY AS 22 INJURED IN WEST BANK VIOLENCE -- APRIL 14,
2005 (1300 HOURS LOCAL)

This is a joint ConGen Jerusalem/Embassy Tel Aviv cable.

11. (SBU) Summary: In the West Bank, the IDF on April 14 shot and killed an al-Aqsa Martyrs, Brigades militant during an arrest operation in the Balatah refugee camp in Nablus, according to Israeli media reports. Palestinian sources, however, have termed the incident a targeted killing by the IDF. On April 13 six Palestinians and as many as four IDF soldiers sustained injuries in clashes with IDF troops north of Hebron; another seven Israeli and Palestinian protesters were injured the same day west of Ramallah when they clashed with Israeli police during a demonstration against the separation barrier the same day. In Bethlehem, five Palestinians on April 13 sustained moderate injuries when a hand grenade exploded in the city's main market. Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Ahmad al-Batsh on April 13 claimed that unknown assailants fired gunshots earlier in the day at his home in village of Bir Nabala, north of Jerusalem. There were no reported injuries from this incident. Although the circumstances behind the shooting are unknown, al-Batsh is known for his pro-reform positions and vocal criticism of the PA. Gaza was largely quiet. End Summary.

West Bank

12. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Death: The IDF April 14 shot and killed a member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs, Brigades in the Balatah refugee camp in Nablus. According to Palestinian sources, the IDF entered the camp and surrounded the building where the militant was hiding. The militant was reportedly shot as he exited the building. Palestinians are labeling the incident a targeted killing. Israeli media sources, however, reported that the IDF killed the al-Aqsa militant after he opened fire on the IDF.

-- Clashes/Injuries: Palestinians on April 13 clashed with the IDF in Surif village, north of Hebron. Six Palestinians sustained injuries. The clashes erupted after an IDF jeep carrying four IDF soldiers overturned in the village. All four soldiers sustained light injuries, according to press reports. The IDF claimed that only two soldiers were injured.

-- Clashes/Injuries: Palestinians and Israeli peace activists on April 13 clashed with Israeli Border Police in Bil'in village, west of Ramallah, to protest the construction of the separation barrier. Seven protesters sustained light injuries during the clashes.

-- Injuries: Five Palestinian minors on April 13 sustained moderate injuries when an IED exploded in the main city market in Bethlehem. The Palestinian police are investigating the exact circumstances of the incident.

13. (SBU) ARRESTS/SECURITY:

-- Incursion/Arrests: The IDF on April 14 entered Nablus and arrested two Palestinian militants. The two militants, associated with Hamas and the al-Aqsa Martyrs, Brigades, are suspected of carrying out attacks against Israeli targets.

-- Police Raid: The Israeli Police on April 13 raided the offices of a Palestinian civil society organization associated with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) in the Old City of Jerusalem. The police searched the premises and left after several hours.

-- Arrests: Israeli security officials on April 13 announced the arrest last week of three members of a Fatah cell from the Qalqiliya area that had planned to carry out an attack on April 10.

-- Security Incident: Unknown individuals on April 13 threw an explosive device at an Israeli military vehicle near

Bethlehem. There were no injuries reported from this incident.

-- Shooting: Unknown individuals on April 13 fired gunshots at an IDF position near Idhna village, west of Hebron. There were no reported injuries from this incident.

14. (SBU) DEMOLITIONS:

-- Israeli settlers from the Qedumim settlement, southwest of Nablus, on April 13 uprooted olive trees belonging to Palestinian residents in a nearby village. The IDF searched the area for suspects, but made no arrests.

15. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- Following an April 13 meeting of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Ministerial Committee on Gaza Disengagement, PA Prime Minister Ahmad Quraya, (Abu Ala,a) stated that the PA is interested in coordinating the withdrawal of Israeli forces and settlers from Gaza and the northern West Bank, according to the Palestinian press.

-- Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) member Ahmad al-Batsh on April 13 claimed that unknown assailants fired gunshots earlier in the day at his home in the village of Bir Nabala, north of Jerusalem. There were no reported injuries from this incident. Although the circumstances behind the shooting are unknown, al-Batsh is known for his pro-reform positions and vocal criticism of the PA.

-- Palestinian and Israeli media reported that approximately 30 Israeli and Palestinian mayors on April 13 held a special conference in Jericho where they agreed to a symbolic one-year civilian hudna (cease-fire). The PA Ministry of Local Government and a number of Israeli mayors sponsored the one-day conference.

-- A coalition of Fatah and Palestinian People's Party candidates won 16 of the 31 seats in student council elections held on April 13 at Bethlehem University. Hamas and PIJ won a total of ten seats, while the PFLP won five seats.

-- Palestinian prisoners incarcerated by Israel plan to go on a hunger strike on April 17 to mark the beginning of a week-long series of activities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to protest their imprisonment.

Gaza

16. (SBU) ATTACKS:

-- Deaths: Nil.

-- Injuries: Nil.

-- Mortars/Rockets: The IDF reported that Palestinian militants fired one mortar shell at Morag settlement in the early morning hours of April 14.

-- Shootings: The IDF reported that militants launched one shooting attack at an IDF outpost north of Netzarim April 13.

-- Explosions: UNRWA and the IDF reported that IDF soldiers found and safely detonated an IED April 13 near an IDF outpost west of Rafah, along the border fence with Egypt.

17. (SBU) BORDER CROSSINGS:

-- Route Four (Salahadeen Road), the main north-south traffic artery, was open April 14, with a major detour at Netzarim Junction.

-- Erez Crossing was open for internationals and for a limited number of Palestinians April 13, and 4,612 laborers and 230 merchants crossed into Israel.

-- The Erez Industrial Zone was open April 13, and 674 laborers entered.

-- Sufa Crossing was closed for Palestinian laborers April 14, but was open for the import of aggregates used in construction.

-- Karni Terminal was open April 14.

-- Rafah Terminal was open for arrivals and departures April 14.

-- Tel al-Sultan checkpoint was closed April 14. Toufah checkpoint was open for residents of al-Mowassi.

18. (SBU) POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS:

-- UNRWA reported that the Islamic and National Powers organization held a demonstration April 13 in Khan Yunis to show solidarity with Palestinian prisoners being held in Israel jails. In al-Maghazi camp, PFLP members demonstrated April 13 demanding that the PA impose a death sentence on the men accused of murdering PFLP leader Mohammad al-Aydi in 1992. On April 13 in Bayt Lahiya and Jabaliya, family members and sympathizers of the woman who was killed April 8 by armed men who attacked her vehicle in a robbery attempt conducted demonstrations. The killers are reportedly Hamas members; Hamas has issued statements disavowing the accused.

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